

TRAIL INFORMATION

The trail to Posi is steep and rocky in places, sandy, and level in others. The trail is not paved. It winds westward up the drainage from the Hot Springs, heads south and bisects the Pueblo at its highest point. It continues northward above the west side of the Rio Ojo Caliente and connects back to the main trail. The round trip hike covers about a mile.

Visitors should wear comfortable hiking shoes, carry water, and plan on an hour's walk.



Illustrations, dragonfly and other Tewa rock art sketches by Lay Powell. Artist's reconstruction by Richard Schlecht, courtesy of National Geographic Society.

POSI-OUINGE VISITOR ETIQUETTE

Remember it is not only disrespectful but also illegal to remove any pottery, building stone, or other artifacts. Please leave the artifacts where you find them.

Posi is a special place to those who live in northern New Mexico. Out of respect for the Pueblo descendants, please do not leave behind anything you bring with you.

Posi remains in good condition because of its proximity to the Ojo Caliente Hot Springs resort. The managers of the Ojo Caliente Hot Springs are an active partner with the Bureau of Land Management in the interpretation and protection of this unique site.

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* Song in *The Turtle Dance at Santa Clara* from "Songs of the Tewa," translated by Herbert Joseph Spinden.

Posi-Ouinge

THE GREENNESS PUEBLO

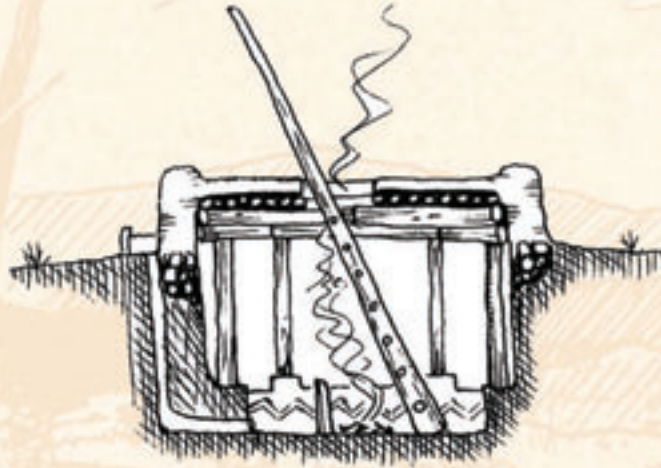
Long ago in the north
Lies the road of our emergence!
Yonder our ancestors live
Yonder we take our being.*



A TEWA LEGACY

The Tewa Indians have a story about their origin. It is a tale of a long journey. They tell about the beginning when the Tewa were one people. Dividing themselves into two groups called the Summer People and the Winter People, they traveled along the sides of two big rivers: the Rio Grande and the Rio Chama. They made many stops along the way, building a village at each location. When the Summer People and the Winter People reunited, they built one village together. They called this place Posi-ouinge (po-see-o-wing-gay).

ARCHAEOLOGY AT POSI-OUINGE



Artist's rendering of a Kiva, an underground ceremonial structure, in cross-section.

Archaeologists know that Posi-ouinge or Posi, the 'Greenness Pueblo,' is a special place for many Tewa Indians. The Tewa are descendants of prehistoric peoples who lived in the Ojo Caliente drainage during the late 1300s until the early 1500s, just before the Spanish entered the area. The word 'Tewa' refers to a group of puebloan inhabitants living along the northern Rio Grande and speaking a similar language. The word 'pueblo' means 'town' or 'village' and was used by the Spanish to describe the communities where the Tewa and other native people lived.

Adolph Bandelier and Edgar Hewitt were archaeologists working in the Southwest during the late 1880s and early 1900s. Both researchers conducted extensive surveys in the area, locating many places where early inhabitants of pueblos lived. Although neither of them excavated Posi, they did describe the layout of the Pueblo and lamented the effects of erosion and pothunting.

Because of their work, we know that Posi, like many of its sister pueblos occupying the neighboring drainages, was a vibrant center of activity in the 15th century. Inhabited by generations of people for over a century, the village may have had as many as 1,000 ground floor rooms and almost as many on the second and third stories! The rooms may have been built in different episodes, much like additions to a modern home, providing storage or extra space for visiting relatives or newcomers moving into the Pueblo.



As you leave the sound of civilization behind, take the opportunity to ponder the long history

of human existence along the Rio Ojo Caliente. "Ojo Caliente" is Spanish for "hot spring," attesting to the Hispanic settlement of the area after the original residents moved on, but before the age of modern resorts.

Throughout history, Ojo Caliente has always been a special place. Continue your walk up the trail and imagine life here half a millennium ago.



Oral histories tell us Posi-ouinge was the Tewa home for a long time until an epidemic struck and the elders decided the people should depart. When the people left Posi-ouinge, they founded several other villages. The Tewa called the first one Yunque-ouinge. When the Spanish arrived, the Tewa moved across the river to Okhay Owinge, "the place of the strong people."

See the Diagram of Posi pueblo room blocks with Trail Guide at the lower right corner of this page.



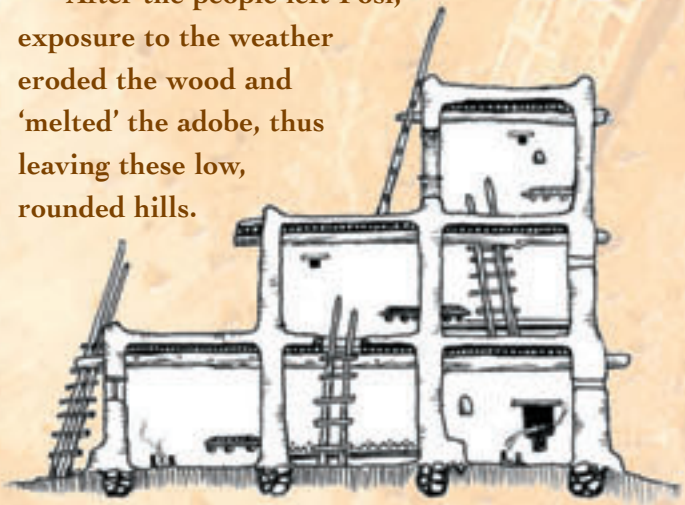
1 Imagine this hill in front of you as more than a rise of the land covered with dirt and cacti.

Approaching the Pueblo five centuries ago, you might have seen a view like that in the illustration above—a 15-foot high wall of smooth, plastered adobe with the sound of voices coming from behind. This mound was once part of a large pueblo, a town of several thousand rooms and hundreds of people.

The mound you are walking across was once one of the numerous room blocks of Posi, holding coursed adobe walls with foundations of rock and supports of wood. The drawing below illustrates what the inside of a room block may have looked like when people lived here during the 15th century.

There were doorways and roof entryways accessing second and third story rooms. Fire pits in the clay floors kept the small rooms warm. Bins and niches along the room walls provided space for storage. Dried food, plants, and pottery hung from wooden pegs extending out from the walls. Adobe was an efficient building material, retaining warmth in the winter, and maintaining cool temperatures in the summer.

After the people left Posi, exposure to the weather eroded the wood and ‘melted’ the adobe, thus leaving these low, rounded hills.



The view you get as you walk along this melted adobe mound might have been the view from the first story rooftop of the Posi Pueblo. Rooftops were busy places in prehistory. They were outside work areas for cooking and stone tool production, sleeping lofts, storage areas, and balconies from which to watch plaza activities. The low, wide expanses you notice during your walk were plazas.



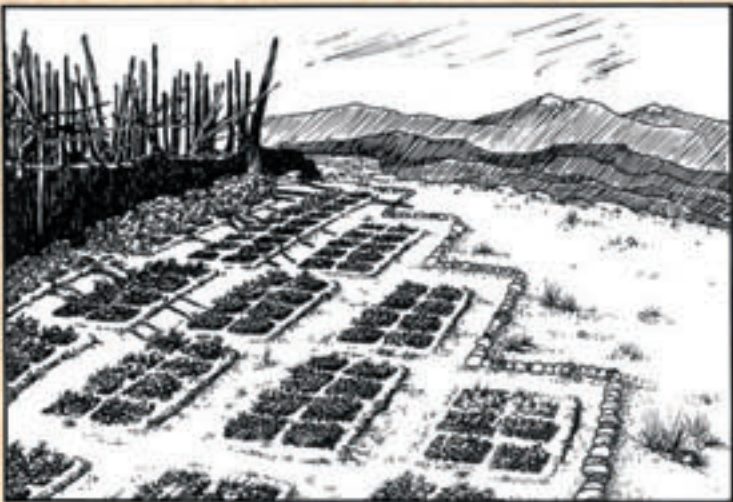
2 If you trip in one of these holes, thank a pothunter! Illegal digging in archaeological sites on public and private lands are the biggest cause of destruction to our heritage sites. Try to reconstruct a story when some of the facts are missing or out of order. That is what pot-hunters do to a site. Take our pueblo rooftops for example. Pothunters disturb stratigraphy—the layers of soil and an artifact’s context—its setting, and the relationship of that artifact to another. Disturbing this pattern makes it difficult for archaeologists to put the pieces in proper order and increases the chances of misunderstanding what they see.

Also, remember these villains are taking something that does not belong to them; they are taking away pieces of the Tewa people’s history.



3 Look at the view—360 degrees of land and space! Using both the artist’s reconstruction and the trail map at the top of the page find yourself on top of the Pueblo. Imagine the cultural landscape of prehistoric Posi—a landscape filled with sights, sounds and work of a vibrant society.

Perhaps you might see summer visitors coming through the Pueblo entrance to the east or you might hear the sounds of drums, and dancing in the plazas. Later in the year, you would hear the rustle of cornhusks as the cobs are readied for fall storage. You could smell the greenness of the river and mineral springs or feel the whoosh of a storm approaching from the mountains to the south as spring approaches or squint into a wedge of late winter light as it slides across the Pueblo walls.



4 Prehistoric pueblo people were members of a society that valued ritual and order. The large circular depression along the trail is a kiva. Kivas are ceremonial rooms and focal points for religious and social activity in the Pueblo.

5 Out of the front door, access to the Rio below and the break between the Pueblo room blocks suggests this opening was one of several entrances from the east. Other less formal entrances probably ringed the Pueblo, allowing the residents to move easily from their homes to other fields, turkey pens, and small gardens.

Walking along the edge of the terrace some 500 years ago, a glance down to the east might reveal an array of rock alignments and clearings—the gardens for the people of Posi.

The Pueblo people also used flood-plains and slopes for gardens, frequently taking advantage of available water provided by seasonal flooding and thunderstorms. Planting in diverse areas gave the inhabitants a variety of environmental niches to exploit and put larger areas into production. This strategy was opportunistic and increased the chances of success with the often-unpredictable elements. However, success or failure depended on understanding the nuances of land and weather. This relationship between the people and the land has always been intimate, direct, and inextricably linked.

Glance over your shoulders as you head back. The river recedes into the distance to the south. The flat-topped, low-lying Black Mesa is visible and just beyond lies the present day community of Okhay Owingeh. These are the boundaries of a familiar landscape to many Puebloan people—one that defines the Tewa world. Included in this landscape is Posi-uingeh, considered by many Tewa to be an ancestral home. Its remains are not the long dead ruins of some ancient culture, but a testament to the strength and perseverance of the Pueblo people.



Diagram of Posi pueblo room blocks with Trail Guide

Did today’s visit help you think about your relationship with the land around you?